

EAST COUNTY FIRE & RESCUE
Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines

SUBJECT: ELECTRONIC MEDIA POLICY

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APPROVED BY:

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PURPOSE:

East County Fire & Rescue (The District), recognizes the value in the legitimate and responsible use of electronic media, including social media and the District website. The District also recognizes that it is necessary to separate work-related use from personal use, and to protect the integrity of the District and the freedom-of-expression rights of its members.

The District has an overriding interest and expectation in deciding what is "spoken" on behalf of the District on electronic media sites and through the use of digital images owned by the District.

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to members and to clarify the boundaries between appropriate and inappropriate use of electronic media by District personnel.

Nothing in this policy is intended to unlawfully restrict a member's right to engage in free speech, protected union activities, or other activities protected by state or federal law.

1. DEFINITIONS

- 1.1. District Electronic Media** - Social media and websites directly authorized and established by the District in accordance with the terms of this policy as an official medium for District communications.
- 1.2. On Duty** - Refers to times in which personnel are being paid by the District for their services, are engaged in official District activities, or are representing themselves as personnel of the District. Off-duty personnel who respond to District incidents and are in uniform or are otherwise identifiable as members of the District shall be considered "On Duty" for purposes of this policy.
- 1.3. Personnel** - Commissioners, employees and volunteers of the District.
- 1.4. Post** - Content (written, spoken, visual) an individual shares on an electronic media site or the act of publishing content on an electronic media site.
- 1.5. Social Media** - A category of internet-based resources that enable the user to generate content and encourages other user participation. This includes, but is not limited to mediums such as, Blogs, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, LinkedIn, etc.
- 1.6. Electronic Media Administrator** - Refers to the designated individual(s) responsible for administering District electronic media in compliance with this policy.

2. GENERAL GUIDELINES

- 2.1. Public Record Act Compliance** - District electronic media and District images are subject to State of Washington public records laws. Any content maintained in District electronic media that is related to District business, including a list of subscribers and posted communication, and all District images are public records. The District is responsible for responding completely and accurately to any public records request for

public records including District electronic media and District images. Content related to District business shall be maintained in an accessible format so that it can be produced in response to a request. Wherever possible, District social media sites shall clearly state that any information posted or submitted for posting are subject to public disclosure.

- 2.2. Record Retention and Management** - District electronic media shall be archived in a manner that is compliant with the Washington State Public Records Act and the Department of Archives record retention requirements.

3. DISTRICT ELECTRONIC MEDIA RESPONSIBILITIES

- 3.1.** All District electronic media must be approved by the Fire Chief or designee prior to use.
- 3.2.** The Electronic Media Administrator or designee shall be responsible for administering and managing all District electronic media and shall insure that the District electronic media use is in compliance with all applicable laws, standards and District policies.
- 3.3.** The Electronic Media Administrator shall be appointed by the Fire Chief.

4. DISTRICT ELECTRONIC MEDIA STANDARD GUIDELINES

The following guidelines apply to all of the District's electronic media:

- 4.1. Identification of District-** District social media sites shall clearly indicate that it is maintained by the District, shall have the District logo and contact information prominently displayed and shall display or have a direct link to District's website.
- 4.2. District Purpose.** District social media sites shall include an introductory statement that clearly specifies the purpose and scope of the District's social media in the following form:
- (a).** *East County Fire and Rescue proudly serves the citizens of the District, including the areas of Fern Prairie, Sunnyside, Bear Prairie, Mt. Norway, and Orchard Hills. This site is intended to update followers on recent or upcoming events within the District and provide information related to our services. The opinions expressed by visitors to this site do not reflect the opinions of the District. Any comments submitted to this site and any lists of users or links are public records subject to disclosure pursuant to RCW 42.56 We reserve the right to delete any abusive, disrespectful, hate speech, or similar comments or posts. Thank you for your understanding.*
 - (b).** *Communications made on this site do not constitute official notice to the District or any District personnel. Public Record requests may not be made on this site and must be submitted directly to the District's Public Record Officer consistent with the District's Public Record Policy.*
- 4.3. District Social Media Administration -** The Social Media Administrator shall insure that all District social media use complies with the following:
- (a).** The District must be in compliance with the Terms of Service of the social media forum hosting the District's social media.
 - (b).** District social media content is managed consistent with this policy.
 - (c).** Public posts, comments or links that contain any of the following forms of content shall be blocked or deleted:

- (i). Profane language or content;
 - (ii). Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation;
 - (iii). Sexual content or links to sexual content;
 - (iv). Solicitations of commerce;
 - (v). Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;
 - (vi). Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;
 - (vii). Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party; or
 - (viii). Content that violates the privacy policies or terms of use of the specific social media platform being used.
- (d). Any content removed based on these guidelines must be retained, including the time, date and identity of the poster when available.
 - (e). Objectionable social media content that is not listed in this policy may only be removed after consultation with the Fire Chief or the District's legal counsel.
 - (f). Observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to social media.

4.4. Links Policy - The District may select links to other social media pages and outside websites that offer helpful resources for users. Once an individual links to another page or site, the District's policies no longer apply and users become subject to the policies of that page or site. District electronic media is intended specifically to share information about District programs, events and services. The District specifically does not provide links to other pages or sites that are:

- (a). Associated with, sponsored by or serving a candidate for elected office.
- (b). Supporting, endorsing or seeking to defeat any candidate for elective office, or any ballot proposal.
- (c). Purely commercial pages with no affiliation to District projects, programs or objectives.
- (d). Individual personal homepages.
- (e). Contain information that violates this policy.

4.5. Copyright Policy -

- (a). All information and materials generated by the District and provided on District electronic media pages are the property of the District. The District retains copyright on all text, graphic images and other content that was produced by the District and found on the page. Individuals may print copies of information and material for their own non-commercial use, provided that they retain the copyright symbol or other such proprietary notice intact on any copyrighted materials they copy. They must include a credit line reading: "Courtesy of East County Fire and Rescue".

- (b). Commercial use of text, District logos, photos and other graphics is prohibited without the express written permission of the District. Use of the District logo is prohibited for any non-governmental purpose. Any person reproducing or redistributing a third-party copyright must adhere to the terms and conditions of the third-party copyright holder. If a copyright holder feels that the District did not use an appropriate credit line they must notify the District Electronic Media Administrator with detailed information about the circumstances, so that the copyright information can be added or the material in question can be removed.

4.6. Personal Use – The viewing of electronic media while on duty or participating in activities of the District is not specifically prohibited. Use of personal, non-business, forms of communication, including electronic media, must be de Minimis (so minor as to merit disregard,) and must not interfere with the needs of the District or job performance. Personnel shall adhere to the following:

- (a). Personnel may not use District email accounts for personal electronic media activities.
- (b). Personnel shall not post or publish any materials that could reasonably be considered to represent the views or positions of the District, without prior authorization from the Fire Chief.
- (c). When personnel state an affiliation with the District while using electronic media for personal purposes, they shall clearly indicate that “the opinions expressed are my own and do not necessarily reflect those of the District”.
- (d). Personnel are free to express themselves as private citizens on electronic media sites to the degree that their speech does not impair or impede the performances of their duties or negatively impact the District's legitimate interest in the efficient performance of the workplace.
- (e). Personnel may use personal electronic media and images as necessary to engage in union activities and whistleblower type activities as protected by state and federal law.
- (f). Personnel shall not post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate any information or District images or video to which they have access as a result of their Fire District affiliation without advance written permission from the Fire Chief or designee.
- (g). Personnel shall not display District logos, uniforms, or similar identifying items on personal electronic media sites and web pages without advance written permission from the Chief or designee. Personnel may not directly or indirectly identify or disclose an association with the District through electronic media if the electronic media activities are inconsistent with this policy, or would negatively impact the District's legitimate interest in the efficient performance of the workplace or the District's reputation or standing in the community.
- (h). Commissioners shall not communicate District business with each other via personal electronic media.

5. DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Violation of the District's guidelines for the appropriate use of electronic media may be subject to appropriate disciplinary action in accordance with the District's disciplinary policy and the applicable guidelines.